

***Statement of the Honorable Joel Hefley***

***Before the***

***Committee on House Administration***

March 1, 2001

**Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:**

I am pleased to appear before you today with my colleague and Ranking Minority Member Howard Berman of California. We appear in support of H. Res. 38, the funding resolution for the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct for the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As you know the Committee on Standards has a bipartisan membership with a nonpartisan professional staff. The Committee has a threefold jurisdiction: to provide advisory and educational services and materials to Members and staff regarding the rules, regulations and other standards that should guide their conduct; to administer, in cooperation with the Clerk of the House, the financial disclosure requirements of the Ethics in Government Act; and to investigate allegations of misconduct brought against Members, officers or employees. The budget requested by the Committee on Standards to carry out its duties in these three areas for 2001 is less than 2 percent more than the funds actually allocated to the Committee on Standards for the year 2000. The figures for 2002 are somewhat higher, reflecting mainly expected computer and other equipment replacement costs and anticipated normal increases in staff salaries.

In carrying out its advisory and educational mission the Committee will continue its many efforts already in place and seek to broaden those efforts in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress. We will certainly strive to complete this year the rewriting of the

*House Ethics Manual*. While we had hoped to complete this effort last Congress, the Committee's substantial investigative workload drew significant staff resources away from this project for much of that time. However, even with these staffing constraints, in April 2000 the Committee issued a "Gifts and Travel" booklet—a thorough revision of that section of the Ethics Manual most in need of updating. In the very near future the Committee expects to issue another booklet completely revising and updating the "Campaign Activity" section of the Manual. These booklets on Gifts and Campaign Activity will be incorporated as chapters in the new Manual.

The Committee will continue to increase the visibility of its educational work. As it has in past congresses, throughout the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress the Committee will present a series of large-scale briefings providing general overviews of the ethics rules for new employees as well for anyone wanting a refresher course. The Committee will also provided briefings covering specific subject areas, for example on Campaign Activity, on Gifts and Travel and on Financial Disclosure. And the Committee will continue to encourage individual Members and staff, as well as groups of any size, to schedule ethics briefings with attorneys from the Committee's Advice and Education staff.

As part of this most important educational mission the Committee also plans to make ethics briefings on specific subjects available on video. To encourage the

widest possible use of this resource, the Committee plans to make these videos accessible via the Committee's web site. We also hope to develop—in-house—an interactive training session, to be available on the web site.

With regard to its role in administering the financial disclosure requirements of the Ethics in Government Act, in addition to the Committee staffs' annual review of over 2,500 financial disclosure forms the Committee is now responsible for developing and supporting the Financial Disclosure Software for use throughout the House. This software allows filers to complete the Financial Disclosure forms on their computers and to import relevant financial data from year to year. This software tool makes the task of completing a Financial Disclosure form at least somewhat more convenient, and therefore facilitates compliance with the requirements. Until recently, House Information Resources had supported the Financial Disclosure software. When HIR support for this and other specific-use software programs was discontinued, the Committee on Standards agreed to oversee the development and support of a replacement program, on the understanding that the Committee would be allocated funds to cover the related costs. A portion of the increased funding the Committee seeks in the category of "Other Services" is due to costs associated with the Committee's new role in connection with this important disclosure tool and the greater part of

that increase is due to other computer hardware, software and training related expenses.

The Committee's investigative responsibilities, of course, will continue to be significant to the Committee's overall mission. The Committee's ability to review and evaluate allegations carefully and, when called for, to undertake investigations thoroughly, and as expeditiously as practicable, is fundamental to its jurisdiction and to its day to day work. The principal expense associated with the Committee's investigative work—as with its work as a whole—is, of course, permanent staff salaries. However, the funding requested for overall staff salaries for 2001 is actually slightly lower than that requested and received for 2000.

The budget before you includes a request for \$25,000 for consultants over each of the next two years. If needed, consultants may require additional funding; on the other hand, consultants may not be needed at all. While the budget allocated for the Committee for the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress did not include authorization for funds in this category, we believe that having the requested low level of funding available for consultants in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress will allow the Committee to have the needed flexibility in investigative situations at minimal cost.

Experience has proven that it is difficult to predict precisely what the Committee's investigative demands will be over the course of a year or, certainly, over the course of an entire Congress. The figures before you represent our best

current calculation. As has happened on occasions in the past, if events exceed these calculations we may appear before you with supplemental requests.

Mr. Chairman that concludes my opening remarks. I now turn to my colleague and Ranking Minority Member Howard Berman for any remarks he may wish to make.